

I am deeply concerned that any action by the FCC to deregulate broadband service will inevitably lead to the demise of the independent Internet service provider (ISP). Many independent ISPs provide consumers with a level of service that greatly exceeds that which is provided by the huge ISPs typically associated with telephone and cable TV companies.

Smaller ISPs must partner with telephone or cable TV companies in order for their customers to access their networks. Since telephone and cable companies also sell ISP services, without regulation there will be nothing to stop them from squeezing out independent ISPs -- their competition -- through predatory pricing or by simply refusing to allow independents to access to their networks.

While many consumers may be well-served by the mass-market, low-cost approach of the huge ISPs that are affiliated with the phone and cable companies, many of us depend on the independents for services which are rarely available from the giants at consumer price levels. Some of these services include static IP addresses, large storage quotas for E-mail and web pages, FTP server access, nearly zero downtime and excellent technical assistance.

The independent ISPs have worked hard to build their businesses by providing a superior level of service. Broadband deregulation will almost ensure that these businesses, and the type of services that they provide, will disappear from the Internet landscape. While that would benefit the giant phone and cable companies, it would do a great disservice to the American public.